



SUCCESS STORY

Entrepreneur Launches Furniture Line

Hub helps Botswana designer gain access to the U.S. market



Photo: Southern Africa Hub

Peter Mabeo showcased his latest collection at the 2007 International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York.

With assistance from USAID, Peter Mabeo Furniture is restructuring to export exclusively to North America and identifying the right distributor to promote its line.

USAID's Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub has been working with Peter Mabeo Furniture, a Botswana-based contemporary furniture design and manufacturing company, to achieve new exports for its furniture line for the North American market. Partnering with the Africa Fast Track Trade program, the Hub sponsored Peter Mabeo, the business's owner and managing director, to showcase his new collection at the 2007 International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York City.

The trip followed the award-winning launch of the Mabeo Collection for the North-South Project, a collaborative effort between Peter Mabeo and Canadian designer Patty Johnson that received the Editors' Award for Craftsmanship at the 2006 International Contemporary Furniture Fair.

Since 1995, Mabeo's company has manufactured furniture for the corporate sector and the domestic retail market in the Southern African region. The North-South Project enabled the company to step into the international marketplace, offering a 10-piece line of high-end, hand-crafted furniture products designed by Johnson and manufactured in Botswana. Balancing craft and local aesthetic with contemporary design, the collection received recognition from *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *Elle Décor*, New York's *City Magazine*, and the *Toronto Star*.

The new designs and exposure at the 2007 International Contemporary Furniture Fair paid off. In April 2008, Peter Mabeo's furniture was on track to appear in 10 showrooms throughout the United States in the prestigious Design Within Reach company. Design Within Reach will feature Peter Mabeo's products as part of their sustainability line. Featured showrooms include New York, Washington DC, San Francisco, Dallas, Chicago, Miami and Los Angeles.

Because it is exempt from customs duty and import tax into the United States and it sources raw material from an Indiana-based lumber supplier, Peter Mabeo Furniture is able to offer the North American market an attractive, quality product at a competitive price. USAID's partnership with Peter Mabeo comes as part of the Hub's concerted effort to help promote the diversification of Botswana's exports beyond diamonds and apparel.